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SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF JAMAL ABU SAMHADANEH SELECTION AS
MOI IG

REF: JERUSALEM 1448

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles: Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) The April 20 announcement of PRC head Jamal Abu Samhadaneh as Inspector General for the MOI is widely seen as a reaction to Abu Mazen's recent appointment of Rashid Abu Shubak as internal security chief and has set up a confrontation between the Hamas cabinet and Abu Mazen. The President met April 21 with the PLO Executive Committee and subsequently issued a decree effectively canceling both the appointment of Abu Samhadaneh and the MOI's announcement of a new volunteer security force. Hamas has yet to react to the move by Abu Mazen and the PLO, but the situation demonstrates ongoing tensions regarding the security forces and command relationships.

Hamas Decision

¶2. (C) The April 20 appointment of Popular Resistance Committee (PRC) head Jamal Abu Samhadaneh as Inspector General for the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) by Hamas Interior Minister Said Siyyam is a reflection of the worsening security situation in Gaza and the struggle between President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Hamas regarding security force organization. Abu Samhadaneh's appointment is seen by many as a Hamas reaction to Abu Mazen's recent promotion of Fatah stalwart Rashid Abu Shubak as internal security chief within the MOI (reftel). There is no clearly understood job description for either inspector general or internal security chief, which may itself lead to tensions if both men attempt to assert overall command of those security forces under the MOI (PSO, Civil Police, Civil Defense). Abu Samhadaneh is also a bitter rival of ex-Preventive Security Organization Chief Mohammad Dahlan, and the appointment is likely to worsen a already tense security situation in Gaza, which has been marked by armed conflicts between PSO officers and various militant groups

¶3. (C) Abu Samhadaneh has a bloody history in Gaza dating back to the first intifada. He was responsible for many attacks on Israelis and murders of alleged Palestinian collaborators. In the second intifada he left the security forces to lead a segment of the PRC in southern Gaza. The PRC is believed to be responsible for the October 2003 killings of three U.S. DynCorp contractors in Gaza. In recent years, the Abu Samhadaneh segment of the PRC has worked closely with Hamas. Abu Samhadaneh's influence in

Gaza is such that Fatah reached out to him in the fall of 2005, offering him the position of military intelligence chief in Gaza, which became vacant upon the killing of Musa Arafat in September 2005. The offer - which he declined - was seen as an attempt to co-opt Abu Samhadaneh and the militias which report to him, estimated to number several thousand.

¶4. (C) In addition to making Abu Samhadaneh Inspector General, Interior Minister Siyyam simultaneously announced that the MOI would form a force composed of volunteers from existing security forces and members of various armed factions; Siyyam claimed that the force would work to support PA security forces but not to replace them. Presidential Spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeinah took issue with the Hamas announcement, saying the decision was illegal and not provided for in PA laws or regulations.

Abu Mazen/PLO Reaction

¶5. (C) On April 21, after a PLO Executive Committee meeting, Abu Mazen issued a decree canceling the decisions of Minister Siyyam, which would vitiate Abu Samhadaneh's appointment and the creation of a new force. While the decision was made in a PLO meeting, Abu Mazen issued the decree in his capacity as chairman of the PLO and President of the PA. The decree will be sent to the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister, and the PLO Executive Committee will release a statement that actions such as those recently taken by Siyyam are unconstitutional.

¶6. (C) There is no reaction from Hamas as yet. The decisions by Siyyam and Abu Mazen may simply presage further

constitutional conflicts between Abu Mazen and the Hamas government.

WALLES